

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
PRESIDENTS OF BRANCHES,
OFFICERS, AND SAINTS GENERALLY,
OF THE
BEDFORDSHIRE CONFERENCE
OF THE
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

BY ELDER JOB SMITH.

BELOVED BRETHREN AND SISTERS, as in our day it has pleased God to reveal the Gospel with the Holy Priesthood, and to call us into a state of trial or probation in the possession of the revelation of His Will, and being thereby called to fulfil our part in the great drama of the Latter-day Work, I have thought it wise in the position that I have been called to hold towards you, to address a short epistle to you all, on the subject which lies nearest our hearts, pertaining to the practical portion of your duties. And as it is your privilege to become otherwise instructed with regard to doctrine, I shall confine myself to what more immediately concerns us at the present time, though it be apparently temporal, for to attend to our present duties always, will perpetuate our Salvation both spiritually and eternally.

I would say, in the first place, that it is necessary for all who desire to be saved in the Kingdom of God, or who desire to have His blessing upon their labours, to dedicate themselves—yea, all that they are, or have, or have influence over, to God, from whom they have received every blessing which they enjoy, and to whom we, with all we have belong, and determine that they will never permit any influence to

pervade, any motive to prompt, nor action to bemean them, that would in any wise divide them from the fellowship which Saints ought to enjoy with Him through the Holy Spirit. For while there is another interest in the breast of a Saint, that more fully absorbs his attention than his religion, or a feeling to withhold the pains, the labour, time, or means, which are required of him, for the rolling forth of the Work of God, he has not his "eye single to the glory of God," his body is not "filled with light," and before he is aware he will find himself numbered with apostates. Then, as individuals, as branches, and as a conference, *let us arise and shake ourselves from the dust, let us disencumber ourselves of every weight and influence that binds us down, or hinders us from becoming useful in the Work of the Great God.* Let us obey His counsels and seek His will, that it may be well with us in a future day.

Dear Brethren, it is gratifying to realise that our prospects, as a conference, are brightening up, and we are daily experiencing proofs that the Lord is mindful of us, and answers our prayers, so that we shall soon feel at liberty from those disagreeable embarrassments which have laid upon us so heavily; the most prominent of which, viz., the book-debt, or embezzlement, I rejoice to say, is in a fair way to be entirely expunged, so that in a few days we shall not need the name, only as a remembrance of the past. The time has now expired when the donations of all the branches should be brought in, and I trust that there are but few branches wherein it is uncollected. However, if anywhere such be the case, it is my duty to state, that the officers and Saints there are required to unitedly and immediately attend to it, that the majority of the branches in the conference be not burdened by the indolence or backwardness of a few; for it is our determination that previous to the appearance of the balance sheet in the *Star*, the deficiency shall be made up, and the difficulty that has been entailed upon us removed. Notwithstanding, every branch will be considered responsible for the sum allotted, and which they agreed to, and should any think of delaying until the rest of their brethren have borne off the burden, so that they may be spared the trouble; I say, that they will be much disappointed, for it will lie upon them as a debt until paid.

I wish to say a word relative to the sub-book-agents. It is extremely painful to realise the amount of debts due to our general agent from them ; and I want to impress it upon the minds of all, the *Priesthood* especially, that we cannot keep out of debt to the Liverpool Office, unless there be more prompt remittances, and better regulations on the part of many sub-agents, than there have been of late. Our misfortunes relative to a general agent ought to teach you to be scrupulously careful that all is right with each of you in a branch capacity.

And I particularly wish to cite your attention for particulars upon this subject to a circular that is about being published in the *Star*, relating to the duties of Book-agents, Treasurers, and others, and it is hoped that those concerned will give it thorough attention, that the irregularities and inconveniences arising from misunderstanding may be avoided,

Let the Stars be made as public as possible by means of the placards, that every person who wishes may become acquainted with the History of our revered and martyred Prophet, and of the Church, and be warned and left without excuse. It will also be a means of getting Stars off our hands that would otherwise uselessly lie in the hands of the agents.

To prevent the accumulation of a stock of back Stars, in our several branches, let those who have commenced the volume be held responsible to take or pay for the successive numbers to the end of this year ; otherwise you will have branch debts upon you, and it is not right that through the negligence or mismanagement of a few, good and diligent Saints should be taxed.

There has been a call made upon the Presidents of branches, to forward to me a list of Stock, in the hands of their agents, and I hope they will not fail to attend to it, as then we shall be able to see what Stock there is in the conference, especially of Stars, and by comparing can make up and save many volumes that would otherwise be scattered among the various branches, and lost in odd numbers. It will also prove that agents have sufficient stock to balance with their bills.

You have lately been furnished with branch records wherein to register the births, baptisms, confirmations, &c., of the Saints, also the ordinations of Officers, and blessings of Children, that occur in your several branches. All this information is intended to be transferred

into the Conference Record ; you will therefore be expected to have your branch Records completed with all the necessary information neatly written in them by next conference, when you will bring them with you to the conference, and the clerk of the conference will transcribe them into the conference Record, and return them to you. It will be necessary afterwards that a copy of every additional entry made from time to time into your branch Records, be transferred to the Clerk of the conference, that he may enter it in the Conference Record, so that at all times, the Conference Record and the branch Record may not disagree with each other.

I wish to remind the presiding Officers of the measure adopted in a conference about a year ago, respecting sending monthly reports to the President of the conference, and to which they all agreed. *I wish them not to forget to perform it.* And if they will send in their report every month, the *full particulars* of all baptisms, confirmations, &c., &c., (with the names, ages, and all other information that is entered into their branch Records,) to me, I will forward the same to the Clerk or Keeper of the Conference Record, which will save them the trouble of communicating the same to him. I hope that these things will receive the attention that is due to them, from the Presidents, and parties concerned, so that our business may be done in order, and our books be properly filled. Let every man attend to his duty, and all who are called to preside, see that every one under them does his duty. When the presiding Officers agree to do any thing, or are appointed to do any thing by a certain time, they should not delay it until the last week or day, so that they cannot do it in time, as is sometimes the case ; I hope they will remember this.

Our conference is appointed to be held on the ninth and tenth days of October at the Odd Fellows Hall, Mill Street, Bedford, commencing at 2 o'Clock p.m., on Saturday, the 9th, and at 10 o'Clock a.m., on Sunday, the 10th.* It is hoped that there will be a general attendance of the travelling and presiding Elders, on the first day of the Conference, so that our business may be mostly got through, and the following day devoted to giving and receiving instructions, from those who may be there to instruct us. We expect the company of our

* The Conference is postponed until the 9th and 10th days of October, to insure the company of Elder J. C. Haight, who could not come on the 2nd and 3rd.

beloved Pastor, Elder Haight, and several Presidents of other conferences. There will be much business to be laid before the Saints, and we desire to have an opportunity to counsel together, and lay plans for the promotion of the Work the ensuing winter.

The Sunday previous to our Conference, there should be held in every branch, a general Church Meeting, at which an account should be presented to the Saints, of what each person has done for each fund, and their feeling ascertained whether they are satisfied with the disposition that has been made thereof; also, whether they are satisfied with the authorities of their branch and conference.

It would be better if the Presidents of branches who hold Book-agencies, could appoint other men to that Office, according to the counsel given in the Star, and thus disburden their minds of what is unnecessary for them to be troubled with; that they may give their minds to the advancement of the Work by a wise and judicious arrangement of all things under their charge.

There are frequently trifling calls required to be made of branches, which it has been customary to make collections for, either in public or private, of the Saints. This is unnecessary if there be a branch-fund in every branch well supported for all casual as well as regular expenses, rent of rooms, &c.; and it is as well to avoid making things appear burdensome by so many calls, collections, &c., which occur so frequent when such things are not met by the branch-fund.

With respect to the conference fund, I wish here to say a word. Let the Saints bear in mind when donating to that fund that there are already ten Elders, totally devoting their time to the ministry in this conference, who require clothing, and other occasional assistance, and a prospect of several more being out in a few days; and this, besides the families continually requiring support, and other contingent expenses which occur upon the conference from time to time. Now if the Saints will freely uphold this fund, we shall, with much more convenience, be able to warn the people, for, by the blessing of God and your assistance, we intend to carry the Gospel into every town and village within the precincts of this conference, as quickly as possible, and bring out the honest in heart, and accomplish a good and glorious work; but, Brethren and Sisters, we are not deceiving you, as is well known by the most of you, when we inform you that we need a more liberal

helping hand than we have heretofore received ; and, in all confidence we expect it, now that we are becoming disburdened of our late embarrassments ; and shall, I trust, soon be in a state of prosperity, untrammelled by these difficulties.

You will all remember that the time for sending our third offering, for the building of a Temple, is on the first day of October next ; and I hope that as far as possible the offerings may be made previous to that time, so that they can be brought in at Conference, and sent to President Richards in due time.

In consequence of other pressing engagements, we have been during this year, rather relax as a conference in our duties towards the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. I would earnestly call your attention to it, dear brethren, that you may have your names in the Record of the Deliverers of the poor, for although it may be beyond your ability to do anything very great, yet by constantly adding your mites from week to week, you will prove to the Almighty, and to His Servants, your constancy and earnest desire to gather the poor who are unable to gather themselves, and also your own anxiety to be gathered. And let it be the design of all who Emigrate the coming season, who may have any surplus means left to them after having paid their tithing, to remember the cries of the enslaved poor, who importune God for deliverance from Babylon, and whom you are now about to leave behind you, by nobly becoming their deliverers, in swelling the fund that is to emigrate them.

Our prospects at the present time for baptising, are of the most flattering kind, in new places where the travelling Elders are now lifting up their voices ; and it is my humble request that the Saints remember them in their prayers, that their labours may be crowned with success : for it is not without difficulties of the most intricate nature, that the Elders travel among strangers, relying upon God and good people for support, to combat the superstition and falsehood engrafted in their minds, and rooted by the force of centuries ; and moreover, the hot and unlimited prejudice of persons of all orders : and if all the Saints pray to God to bless them, we cannot but expect that they will bless themselves. And woe be to them that shut up their bowels of compassion against these servants of God, for it shall be said to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the

Devil and his angels ; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not ; inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me." When they (*i.e.*, the Elders,) come among you, and are destitute of any of the necessities of life, administer to them kindly ; if they need clothing, let it be provided, that they may feel well when engaged in administering salvation to your fellow men. In fact, do unto them as you would that others should do unto you, were you in a like situation.

Brethren and Sisters, be awake to your interest, forget not your covenants ! whatever you covenant to do, DO IT. Do not forget your prayers, do not forget to pray for those who preside over you in the Lord, for, remember ! when God blesses the head, the whole body feels the enlivening influence. Bear in mind in all your duties, that you have covenanted to do right, and to serve God. If you would always do this, it would prevent you from being subject to sin and the Devil. Do as those tell you who are authorized to teach you, for their's is the voice of God *to you*. 'Tis God's to command, 'tis our's to obey, and this is the nearest, yea the *only* way to celestial glory. All this is for your own good,—self-sacrifice brings eternal gains ; self-denial, eternal joys ; obedience, authority, and so on ; for the measure we mete shall be meted to us again. If you would be great, you must first be good ; for thus does the Lord order it in this Kingdom. Men have become great who were not good, or rather, they sought and obtained more greatness than goodness, and were hurled down when arrived to the imaginary pinnacle of their fame, to partake of the reward of their inordinate and unjust ambition.

Finally, brethren, let me say with those who are my superiors, "gather ! gather !!" do not be found in Babylon, when you might have escaped. You that have means, see that the God of this world does not obtain the mastership of your minds, so far as to cause you to succumb to his dictates, to stay and serve him a little longer. Go where you can dedicate what you have to God, that you may receive the Heavenly treasures that fade not away.

Those who can possibly raise £10 a-head, for old and young, I would urge to make ready to bear their sincerest and strongest testimony, by gathering the coming season. Report yourselves to me as early as

possible, that I may report you to President Richards, that you may be organized into a company, and your means entrusted to the care and management of some trust-worthy and experienced man, who can use it to the best advantage for the good of the whole company.

That you may be blessed and prospered in all things, and that the Spirit of God may rest upon you, to inspire your souls to act nobly and heroically, that we may all be crowned with the blessing of success and eternal life, is the prayer of

Your faithful Servant,

JOB SMITH,

President of the Bedfordshire Conference.

Bedford, September 7th, 1852.